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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by the International Human Rights Law Group, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is distributed in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[9 August 1993]

Population transfer into Tibet

1. Tibet has been occupied by the People's Republic of China for over 40 years. The Tibetan people have not only been denied the right to self-determination, but many of the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the rights to freedom of speech, expression, association and religion. The Tibetan people are subjected to torture and imprisonment for their religious and/or political beliefs.

Population transfer as a violation of human rights

2. One of the most critical threats to the survival of the Tibetan national, cultural and religious identity is the population transfer of Chinese into Tibet.

3. At its forty-fourth session, the Sub-Commission recognized, in its resolution 1992/28, that "the policy and practice of population transfer, including the removal of people and the implantation of settlers, particularly where induced or conducted by Governments and occupying authorities, invariably have serious consequences for the enjoyment or constitute a serious violation of the human rights of the peoples removed, the original inhabitants of the countries and territories concerned, as well as the settlers."

4. The Tibetan people are a distinct people with their own language, culture, religion and heritage. Population transfer contributes to the destruction of the Tibetan culture and identity and hinders the ability of the Tibetans to develop economically, politically and socially. Population transfer violates the right of the Tibetan people to exist as a people and therefore further jeopardizes their right to self-determination (see Population Transfer and the Survival of the Tibetan People, Michael van Walt van Praag).

Situation in Tibet

5. The influx of Chinese settlers in Tibet has now reached a point at which the distinct identity of the Tibetan people and their ancient civilization is being overwhelmed. Chinese settlers dominate the political and economic spheres on the Tibetan Plateau.

6. It is difficult to assess exactly how many Chinese are now in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan autonomous prefectures. However, Tibetans have become a minority in most cities and towns in Tibet, and the number of Chinese continues to increase at an alarming rate. In the Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures under the Qinghai Province, the Chinese population increased twelvefold over a 30-year period, from 1953-1982 (see Beijing Review, April 1988). There is also a considerable military presence in Tibet. While the Chinese claim that there are about 40,000 military personnel in the TAR alone, outside estimates have ranged between 100,000 and 600,000.

7. Regardless of the numbers, Chinese official statements have left no doubt that there has been a long-standing government policy to transfer populations from the east to the west of China, which means to the TAR, Kham and Amdo. Chinese leaders often refer to the policy. In 1987 Deng Xiaoping told President Jimmy Carter that Chinese were indeed being encouraged to move into Tibet because the TAR "needs Han immigrants as the [Autonomous] Region's population of about 2 million was inadequate to develop its resources" (Reuters, 30 June 1987).

8. The Panchen Lama, Tibet's second highest monk and the Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress, went on record in a 1987 speech as saying that "Tibet has suffered greatly because of the policy of sending a large number of

useless people. The Chinese population in Tibet started with a few thousand and today it has multiplied manifold ... Today the Chinese personnel come to Tibet accompanied by their families." (The Panchen Lama Speaks)

9. The policy of population transfer is often couched in terms of needing to develop natural resources. The Chinese Government states that it has "adopted a series of measures to encourage" Chinese to work in regions inhabited by the minority nationalities to develop their resources (see Beijing Review, 10 October 1983).

10. China's development strategy for most areas of Tibet relies upon large numbers of Chinese administrators and workers settling in the region. This has resulted in an influx of workers - such as miners and lumberjacks - and a costly administrative superstructure. In the TAR, for example, while economic output has quadrupled from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, the administrative management cost has increased tenfold (see Poverty of Plenty, Xiaoquiang and Bai Nanfeng). Housing, health care, cultural and educational facilities are all part of the enormously expensive undertaking to provide for Chinese in Tibet. The cost of keeping one Chinese in Tibet is equal to that of four in China (see The Panchen Lama Speaks). As a result, China expends considerable resources to maintain Chinese personnel in Tibet.

11. To encourage Chinese settlement in Tibet, the Chinese Government offers an array of benefits including enticements for Chinese settlers to extend long-term assignments and/or retire in Tibet. Annual wages for these personnel are 87 per cent higher in Tibet than in Chinese provinces, according to one government figure.

Impact on the Tibetan people

12. For Tibetans, the motive of Chinese migration, whether spontaneous or Government-induced, is a secondary concern to its impact. As a result of the population transfer, Tibetans are generally marginalized in economic, political and social spheres in their own land (see Merciless Repression, Asia Watch). There is extensive evidence that this population transfer has also led to a de facto system of discrimination in housing, education and health care.

13. The huge population influx, coupled with unsustainable resource extraction introduced by Chinese management, has also caused severe environmental damage on the Tibetan Plateau. The most critical problems include rampant deforestation, loss of species' habitat, reduction in biodiversity, desertification, and the effects of misguided economic "development" schemes. In the political sphere, the Chinese influx has led to the domination of both influential and lower-level government posts by Chinese. This has enabled preferential access by Chinese settlers to government contracts, services, employment benefits, etc., and has led to the further marginalization of the Tibetan people.

Conclusion

14. The Tibetans continued existence as a people is severely threatened by the massive influx of Chinese into Tibet. The International Commission of Jurists has stated that "the principle or right of self-determination of people must surely include the right of people who inhabit a disputed territory to determine their own future" (see Israel Settlements in Occupied Territories, International Commission of Jurists). Denied the ability freely to determine their own political, economic and cultural future, the Tibetan people are being denied their right to self-determination.